

NO MORE YESTERDAYS

by Mark W. Shelton

Mark Shelton is a Southern California native and actively pursues his interests in digital photography, 3-D animation, DVD and video production, film and television, commercials, music (guitar, bass, and keyboards), stand-up comedy and improv, and last, but not least, traveling God's beautiful Earth, taking pictures along the way. Mark attended the GATEWAY VOYAGE® in September 2006.

In April 2006, I had a double spinal fusion on my lower back. The surgery was a major success, as was my rehabilitation. I swam and walked the beach every day, ate healthily, and drank lots of water. The best part was being able to walk upright again, no longer dragging my knuckles on the ground like my Cro-Magnon ancestors of ages past. The surgery was a result of a *horrible* fall in 2003 that pinched the nerves in my lower back, legs, and feet and fractured my L5 vertebra. The neurosurgical genius who pieced me back together explained that I would experience major numbness in my back, legs, calves, feet, and toes, but in six to eight months I might be able to function normally again, for the most part. Wow! Three years of suffering would finally come to an end. I don't take pills. They mess with my brain, body, and digestive system and even worse, shut me off from receiving the incredible flow from our omnipotent creator. That alone is the true reason I avoid them.

Three months post-op, I decided to go to an actual physical therapy center, trusting that they could take me to the next level. I had no conception of the month of torture I was about to undergo. It led to horrible stabbing pains in my hips and spontaneous cramping in my legs, feet, and toes both day and night. I had worked so hard and had come so far. Why was this happening? A CAT scan revealed that the surgical sites were healing above average and everything looked great, but a static picture couldn't explain the "*why*" of my horrifically random pain. It was *agonizing*.

The next morning I woke up in a very dark funk, feeling hopeless about my recovery and feeling like I didn't have it in me to carry on anymore. Not in a suicidal kind of way but in a way that's hard to explain. So I asked God for help. I begged, I cried, I said: "Please, God. Please guide me to a nurturing place—somewhere I can ground and heal myself with the innate intelligence you've bestowed on all of us. Show me the way back to your light."

Lying in bed, I thought about Robert Monroe and The Monroe Institute. I had called weeks earlier to see if there were any openings in the *GATEWAY VOYAGE*, but it was full. I spoke out to Bob and said, "Hey, Bob . . . can you make a space for me?" The adage "Be careful what you ask for" couldn't have held more truth. Within the hour, Karen Viar called to let me

know that a space was available and I was welcome to participate. It was so much of a sign from God (and Bob) that I decided to take the leap of faith and make it happen for myself.

The TMI experience was incredible and provided me with an array of tools and information to use in my future. The trainers, the participants, the guest speakers and the environment all came together to magnify my experience. Most *amazing* was that my refreshed perspective didn't occur until after I left the program and was thrust back into society. Then some extraordinary miracles occurred, which can best be described as the revelation of my own purpose and destiny in *Technicolor*. The people I met and connected with, the naturally beautiful places I saw, and the internal reflection all enabled me to have an epiphany—one that would help me recharge, reconnect, and forge ahead just like I did before my accident. What epiphany, you ask? Well, in a nutshell, I was allowed to no longer see or feel my yesterdays. My perspective changed so I could move forward unhindered by past regrets, losses, and misunderstandings.

On my return home, I called my mom from the airport. I told her that despite the times we haven't spoken because of anger, resentment, misunderstanding, and frustration, it is all good. Everything happened the way it was supposed to happen, and she is the greatest mother on the planet. No longer would I fret over not feeling more loved, nurtured, and understood and of all things, that our bond wasn't stronger over the years. There were no regrets. It happened the right way. Despite the many times she might have felt sad or guilty about not being a better giving, loving, and nurturing parent, she did it all the right way. If she hadn't done everything exactly as she did, I would quite possibly never have arrived at this moment of complete awareness, because I wouldn't have needed to search for the truth myself. I told her, "*I love you so much, Mom, and thank you for being you and doing it just the way you did.*"

My mother was virtually speechless, and everyone who knows my mother would know this was most likely the first day in her existence when that had happened. As she thanked me, I could hear in her voice the tears welling in her eyes. For the first time in a long time, they were happy tears. Could I give her a better gift? Yeah, maybe a hug and kiss, which I promptly delivered on arriving home.

I asked Mom to go to Dad, wrap her arms around him, and tell him the exact thing I'd just told her. And to tell him that despite the years he was gone from our lives while flying presidents, saving people's lives, and fighting for his country, that he did it *all the right way*—that I couldn't be prouder to have a father who gave *so much* to everyone and that none of it was a loss to me any longer. "Please tell him how sorry I am for the times we didn't speak because of different beliefs or misunderstandings," I said. "And tell him how much *I love him* for all the ways he loves his family, and the tremendous sense of self that he has given all of us as a result of *doing it all right.*"

I imagined my mom putting her arms around my dad and how for one moment in their lives, they could stop, stand in solitude as the *ONE* they are and feel the jubilation of knowing their number-one son had finally reconnected to the incredible loving grace of God. What a gift for them and for me!

Sure, eliminating my physical pain would be a wonderful gift. But somehow knowing that everything is complete between my family and me means that much more. Sometimes pain doesn't hurt so much when you know that the people around you truly love you and would do anything for you in your time of need. That in itself is one of the greatest gifts I know.

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